

Prologue

The storm whipped endlessly around the mountain, flying seemed impossible, especially to a wolf with feathered wings. But he didn't have feathers, no, he wasn't like the weak wolves to the west, he wasn't one of those pathetic followers of the king.

He ducked back into the cave and tucked in his leathery wings against his matted dark green back. The cave smelled of sulfur and death, as always, though it smelled better than the ash filled lands outside The Ring. Heat radiated off the stone walls and made him feel awful, this new wet, damp feel made everything worse. Abschaum didn't know how long it would take his packmate to get back, but he hated waiting.

He coughed on the stale air and settled down on the dusty hot stone ground, watching the raging storm from inside, where it was more or less safe. He could barely hear, the storm was so loud. The Ring had been so quiet for months, he didn't remember the last time there had been a storm.

He grimaced at the memory of lightning and the pain of his beauty being torn apart by their former master. How he hated him. How he hated the King's son.

"If only Darkfang had finished the job, smug idiot." he muttered, twitching his wings restlessly.

He immediately jumped in fear when a wolf crashed through the cave entrance.

His fur was matted with grey with wet ash, but you could still see the natural blood red coloring underneath. The wolf spread his vast black leathery wings and shook himself, his red eyes locking on Abschaum.

Abschaum immediately stood and bowed his head to the larger wolf, who just snorted in disgust. Abschaum immediately noticed that he was holding something in his maw. It squirmed and yelped in pain as the large wolf gripped it tightly but the back of his tiny neck.

"What...is that?" Abschaum growled in disgust.

Bloodmoon raised his head and glared at Abschaum again before throwing it to the ground.

“My son.” he growled.

The pup was covered in ash. But beneath the filth Abschaum could see that one of his wings was indeed leathery and bat-like like Abschaum and all the others wolves under Darkfang, but on the other side there was a little stub with tiny little hairs that no doubtedly would become a feathered wing like the wolves descended of Thunderpaw.

Even at the thought of the king's son, Abschaum gagged.

Bloodmoon shook himself again, but it did little to clear his fur of the wet ashy filth. Even with his superior's unusual silence he could see he was furious.

“I thought there were two?” Bose said suddenly. Abschaum hadn't even noticed he was there.

Bose stood at the beginning of a tunnel that led down into a seemingly endless set of tunnels that ran all across the Mountains forming The Ring. His fur was pure black Bose looked infinitely cleaner than Abschaum and their leader.

Bloodmoon flicked his tail at Bose, “There was, but unfortunately the other was ‘saved’ before I could get him, I was left with this tiny disappointment of a wolf.”

The pup was squirming and crying helplessly, its eyes weren't even open yet.

“Why'd you even bother,” Abschaum protested, “Look at it, it's so small and...weak.” he sniffed in disgust.

Bose looked at Abschaum, his black eyes unblinking, Abschaum couldn't tell if he was agreeing with him or glaring.

“He's an Alatian, he will age and grow unlike us.” Bloodmoon explained, “But I was hoping for more wolves than this, it's starting to vex me...”

Bloodmoon stopped talking, he simply looked at the squirming pup thoughtfully.

“How will he help us? We'll have to feed him and make sure he doesn't die.” Bose brought up, “He will certainly be a vex.”

“Yes...” Bloodmoon started, “Give him some of Chider’s Black Serum, if we’re lucky he’ll be able to live off of it like the Changelings, and if he doesn’t die he might be able to change like them without having to inject it.”

Bose nodded then slinked into one of the tunnels, most likely looking for Chider.

Abschaum looked to Bloodmoon then the pup. Bloodmoon was looking at his son intently, his red eyes gleaming. Abschaum had no idea what went on inside his dark head.

“I have an idea of what to name him.” Abschaum huffed.

“No.” Bloodmoon growled, “I already named him.”

Abschaum snorted, “What could be better than Runt or Useless?”

Bloodmoon gave Abschaum a deadly look before turning his attention back to his son. Was that...affection in his eyes? Whatever it was, it disgusted Abschaum.

“His name will be Vex.”

Abschaum tilted his head, “I guess it’s accurate., but why that?”

Bloodmoon slowly turned his head to look at Abschaum, his mouth open in a wide grin, “Because he’ll help me torture the Four Packs while you prepare for Darkfangs return.”

Chapter 1

Gee, thanks Ray. Jupiter thought sarcastically as he plummeted towards the rocks below.

It wasn't really Ray's fault he fell off the cliff. His older friend was trying to protect him from his tormentors, Shano and Winter. Shano had found it a good time to start moving Jupiter's appearance again, calling him Googly Eyes and Dragon Pup. He should have just ignored him like Ray always said.

But the words still hurt. He couldn't help it if he looked different. Instead of having normal feathered wings he had leather wings like a bat, and his eyes were mismatched, one brown, one blue. No wolf had ever been born like that, ever.

The two older bullies had pursued Jupiter to the cliffs, where he liked to be alone. The conflict that had just happened moments ago still burned in his mind.

"What's wrong Googly Eyes, don't you want to play?" Shano taunted, his head high. Jupiter stayed silent, just glaring at them.

"Come on, Judi, let's play Fly and hide." He started again, "Oh wait, you can't!" Beside him, his sister laughed cruelly.

Jupiter shrunk back, squeezing his tiny bat-like wings closer to his black fur. He pinned his ears, "Just leave me alone Shano..." he mumbled.

Shano took a step closer, his black feathered wings spread wide, "What was that? I can't hear you when you mew like a pathetic Unicat, Googly eyes."

Jupiter turned away to stare out into the ocean, he tried to tune out the older wolves mocking.

Shano raised one red paw that contracted against his dark grey fur, and slammed it down on the stone ground, "Hey!" he growled, "Don't ignore me, Dragon Pup!"

Jupiter could feel Shano's hot breath on his wings.

Jupiter winced back, which just made Winter laugh again, "Pathetic, why don't you fight back, weirdo?"

Shano jabbed Jupiter's black leather wings painfully. "Ow!" Jupiter jumped away, one paw nearly slid off the edge of the cliff.

The fur along Jupiter's back stood on end. If he fell, he wouldn't survive. Unlike Shano and Winter, who had just finished flight training, Jupiter still hadn't started flight training, thanks to his mother, Ursa. She always worried about him. Jupiter was nearly seven

cycles older now, most of the pups in River Pack his age could already glide from one branch of the Great Tree to the other.

Jupiter's mind raced as he felt another anxiety attack pull at his chest.

Just then a familiar voice rang overhead, "Aren't you too old to be bullying Jupiter, Shano?"

All three wolves turned and looked up. Jupiters heart instantly soared as he saw familiar yellow fur and perfect white wings glide over head. Ray!

Ray landed gracefully in between Jupiter and his tormentors. Her blue eyes bright with defiance.

He was instantly relieved.

Shano scowled, "Never too old to put the runt in his place."

Behind him, Winter flicked her pale blue wings uncomfortably.

Even though Ray was only a few weeks older than Jupiter, and several Cycles younger than Shano, she still seemed bigger than the two bullies.

"How about you back off, before I make you." Ray growled low, her claws digging into the stone.

Shano huffed, looking unimpressed, "You can't make me do anything Bray."

When he advanced, Ray instinctively took a step back, which pushed Jupiter a little too close to the edge of the cliff.

Jupiter squicked in alarm and flapped his small wings to balance himself along the cliff's edge.

Ray was too focused on the two older wolves to notice. But Shano did.

A dangerous grin tugged at the corner of his maw and he jumped forwards, just enough to scare Ray into backing up right into Jupiter.

Jupiter's back legs were pushed off the edge.

Jupiter yelped in surprise as his stomach rose to his throat. And he plummeted.

Now, the sea salt wind rushed past him, stinging his eyes. The ocean crashed in and around the long jagged spears of stone, making them gleam like daggers. This would be a horrible way to die. All He could think now as he plunged towards his doom was...

"Aaaaaaah!!!"

"Jupiter!" Ray's cry of alarm sounded above him.

He struggled to turn his head and look up at his best friend. She was diving towards him, her eyes narrow with determination.

"Spread out your wings!" She called.

Jupiter flung out his wings and legs and felt his descent slow, just enough for Ray to get close.

A sudden jolt of pain in his tail caused Jupiter to yelp.

Jupiter jerked his head around to see Ray grabbing onto his dark tail with her mouth, her white wings beating furiously.

“Sterp merving sur murch!” she said through a mouthful of Jupiter's tail.

Jupiter could see her struggling with his weight. She was in flight training. Jupiter didn't know how long she could hold him.

He flapped his strange wings, trying to help her loosen the load. They were only a couple wing lengths away from the clustering of stalagmites that glittered with sea spray below them.

Jupiter glanced along the cliff wall, in search of something they could land on. Not far was a dark hole barely hidden in the shadows of the setting sun, just a little ways above them. *A cave!*

“Ray, look!” Jupiter flicked his head towards the cave. Ray saw it too and they both beat their wings wildly until they were safely above flat stone instead of sharp rocks and water.

Ray released Jupiter's tail, causing him to faceplant into the dusty cave floor.

Ow!

Jupiter scrambled to his paws and sneezed as more dust went up his nose. His legs suddenly felt wobbly and he sat down.

Behind him, Ray landed heavily, but far more gracefully than Jupiter. As soon as her paws hit the ground she collapsed out of exhaustion.

The two sat there for a few moments, breathing hard. Jupiter turned and looked her over. She looked tired and a little ruffled up but she was fine. He sighed in relief.

“Thank you, Ray.” Jupiter sighed.

Ray sat up and shrugged, still slightly out of breath “You would have done the same.”

Not that I could. He tucked his wings closer to his body and looked at his paws.

Ray huffed and rested one of her wings on his, “Oh stop that!” She said indignantly.

“Stop what?”

“The whole *sad, mopey* I’m the worst ever bla bla bla.” She stated, “stop it.”

“How do you know?!” Jupiter snorted, “You can’t read minds.”

Ray snorted, “Well, you make it very easy, you look like a depressed salmon.”

Jupiter tried to frown and look petty, but he couldn’t be mad at Ray.

Ray nudged his wing and looked at him sympathetically, “you good?”

Jupiter sighed, “I’m fine...it’s just, this is the third time you’ve had to save me from those two this week, and...” he trailed off.

“You don’t like being saved by a *girl*?” She teased, eyes gleaming playfully.

Jupiter nodded shyly. *Gives them more of a reason to mock me.*

“Well too bad. If I don’t save you, who will?”

Jupiter looked out, back at the sea, “I wish no one had to save me,” his voice trailed off and he muttered, “Shano’s right, I don’t belong here.”

“Don’t think that!” Ray scolded, “You just need to stand up for yourself and show Shano that you deserve to be here like any other wolf in River Pack.” Ray said.

“But I don’t!” Jupiter blurted, his eyes stinging, “You see how everyone looks at me, and they’re right, I’m a freak with weird eyes and ugly wings!”

“Hey!” Ray barked angrily, stepping away from him.

Jupiter shrank back, surprised.

She stepped in front of him, wings flaring slightly. "You don't get to say that."

He shrank back. "But it's true! Look at me, I'm-"

"-my best friend," Ray cut in.

Jupiter froze.

Ray's eyes burned, bright and fierce. "That's what you are. And I'm not letting you talk about him like that."

Jupiter swallowed hard.

The light from the setting sun caught the edges of her wings, making them glow like fire.

Jupiter stood straighter, "You're right...I'm sorry." He sighed.

Ray nodded triumphantly and tucked her wings, "Let's go, it's getting dark."

Jupiter glanced nervously back out at the opening, the sun was dipping into the ocean making it turn orange.

"Um...how?" He asked, hopelessly, "It's not like we can fly back up."

Ray frowned, then her ear twitched, "Maybe the cave goes back?"

Jupiter turned and looked back down the cave, it did go farther back and it seemed to slope upwards at a certain distance, it was a tunnel.

Jupiter followed behind Ray as she padded up the tunnel. It seemed to go on forever and the darkness closing in on them made him feel claustrophobic. The tunnel wasn't small, it was actually quite large, large enough that Jupiter bet a full grown Mountain Pack wolf could walk through it with their wings spread out.

They walked for a while, so long that Jupiter lost himself in his thoughts. He was so distracted that he didn't notice the third set of paw steps sounding ahead of them. Ray did. She stopped suddenly, causing Jupiter to bump into her.

"Wha-" He started, confused.

Ray turned and put a feather to his mouth, “Shh...” she growled.

The two stood there, ears pricked. Even though they weren’t moving, they could still hear two sets of paw steps making their way down the tunnel, towards Jupiter and Ray.

“Smell that?” Ray whispered, “That’s not River Pack scent!” Jupiter could hear the slight fear in her voice.

Jupiter sniffed the air. She was right, there was an ashy scent in the air.

Fire Pack!

Chapter 2

Ray pushed Jupiter to the side of the tunnel, deeper into the shadows. Even with his night vision, he could barely make out Ray's outline in the dark.

The fur along his back prickled. They were in trouble; Fire Pack and River Pack weren't on good terms with each other. He knew the two Alphas had once been friends, but something happened a year ago which caused them to be at the edge of war.

Pawsteps thudded closer. Ray held her breath beside him. She instinctively put a wing over him. Even with the growing fear inside his stomach, Ray's presence helped, just a little.

Voices drifted down the tunnel.

"I told you we'd get smokin' lost, mate." said one of the voices, it was somewhat accented and youthful sounding. He guessed they were ten wing lengths ahead of them.

"Oh, don't be a dim ember, Sunny!" a second voice jabbed, this one sounded more playful and older. Jupiter felt a slight movement from Ray, but he didn't know what it meant.

"These tunnels run all through Alatya and open into some huge sparking cavern!" the second voice continued.

The first voice made a sound like sighing, “We’re supposed to be scouting, remember?” he reminded the second, “Ash said he saw three River Packers close to the Cliffs of Fear.”

The voices were so close, Jupiter thought he could feel their pawsteps hit the ground only a winglength away from his head.

“That’s why we’re coming through here, I’ve already traveled through these tunnels a few times. I’m pretty sure this one leads us right to the cliffs,” the second voice explained confidently. “And remember what our other *secret* mission is? If things with Fyre and Byro goes dim, we’ll need a place to hide until we can take down Sco-”

“You’re just going to get me in trouble with Kevver again, mate.” The first voice interrupted, “We should be focusing on helping the pack, other than destroying...it...” his voice slowed, “Do you smell fish?”

The two wolves were a lot closer now, almost right next to them.

Jupiter felt Ray’s fur fluff up and her feathers ruffle. Jupiter’s heart thudded in his chest and his muscles cramped from crouching.

“River Pack...” the second muttered.

Suddenly Ray was yanked off Jupiter’s back with a yelp.

“Make yourself known Wader!” The second voice growled.

“Wait! Stop, we’re not hunters!” Ray protested.

“There’s another one.” The one called Sunny barked.

It was too dark to see what was going on and Jupiter was frozen in fear. He tried squeezing himself into a smaller ball against the wall, if anything, his dark fur would help camouflage him more in the dark.

He felt strong limbs brush his wings, then lift him easily.

No! I can’t be caught! River Pack already practically hates me! How will Fire Pack react when I’m caught?!

Jupiter squirmed, to the annoyance of the wolf carrying him, "Smoke it down kid!" the second scout grunted.

Jupiter could hear Ray struggle and fight the first scout. She was brave and strong for her age, but the scout was older; Jupiter could tell.

Finally a light showed ahead and the four wolves stopped at an exit, now he could see them clearly.

The First one, the one carrying Ray, shoved her into the fading light. He was a bright yellow, brighter than Ray. For a moment Jupiter thought the shadows were tricking him but now that he could see this one more clearer he could see his face, ears, underbelly, paws and tail tip were black, along with his wings, aside from his feather tips fading to a sky blue that matched his eyes.

He studied Ray with a quick glance, "Their just pups, barely started flight training by the look of it."

The second scout, the one carrying Jupiter, put him down not so gently.

He stepped over to Ray, his bright green eyes flashed with curious recognition, "Wait a sparking minute,"

Ray looked up at the second scout, her eyes filled with anger and defiance before suddenly lighting up with recognition and relief.

"Alano?!" She gasped.

Alano laughed, "No sparking way!" he turned to his companion, wings spread, "Sunny! This is the little border breaker I was telling you about!"

The first scout, Sunny, relaxed slightly and looked apologetically at Ray, then she glanced at Jupiter again, and started staring at his wings.

Jupiter shrank back.

"So it's true..." Sunny muttered.

Ray instantly ran to Jupiter's side, and glared at Sunny, "What!? What rumors have you heard, they're probably fake, you shouldn't trust everything the messengers say."

Alano snorted, "Don't worry Ray, I told my brother all about him, he's not like the others."

Brother? They look nothing alike! Jupiter glanced at the two scouts, they were totally different, Sunny was taller, thinner, and his wings were longer, he looked graceful, and his fur looked like dappled shadows on the sun, with his wings looking like the crest of blue sky breaking through the night.

Alano was shorter, more muscular, and his fur was a rough grey, he had a few darker stripes under his eyes. His fur was very messy, like he hadn't cleaned it or even taken care of it for a full cycle of the moon. In complete contrast to his otherwise dull appearance, his wings were a bright flaming orange and his eyes a mischievous green, and a different shape than Sunny's eyes.

How are these two brothers?

"You told him!?" Ray howled. "That was the ONE THING I told you not to do Alano, what's the point of helping the overthrowers if you're just gonna tell everyone our secrets?!"

Alano's face grew cold, "Look missy, we can trust him, he's my smoking brother, and he's in on the plan, he might be a little goody-too-shoes but at least he knows when we're being oppressed!"

Ray and Alano kept shouting at each other, but Jupiter couldn't help feeling overwhelmed by all the sudden information.

Overthrowers? Oppressed, what on earth is going on, and why is Ray helping Fire Pack?

With a jolt in his stomach a thought crossed his mind, what if Ray was helping Fire Pack overthrow River Pack?

He staggered out of the circle of arguing and over to a tree and took several deep breaths. He remembered what his mother said when this happened. Just breathe. In... and out. In... and out.

His heart slowed after a while, he curled up into a ball and tried not to cry. He could still hear Ray arguing with Alano. He felt something rise in his chest a little, like a burning in his stomach, Ray had a friend in Fire Pack? And she didn't tell him?

He looked up at the sky, trying to push down this strange new emotion. He could see stars starting to glow in the now almost completely dark sky.

He squinted, some of the stars were blinking in and out. Now that the arguing had stopped he could actually hear wing beats coming from the west.

Wait...

He looked back to where Ray and Alano had been arguing, but they were gone. Panic rise up in his throat again.

“Jupi!”

Jupiter shot up trembling, he could see Alano waving a bright orange wing at him from the indent of the tunnel entrance.

“Get your sparking tail over here!” Alano whispered again, not so quietly.

Jupiter scrambled across the dry grass, but before he could get over to the tunnel a paw slammed down on his tail.

Jupiter yelped in pain, another paw shoved him to the ground.

He couldn't see who these new wolves were, but he knew that they must have been another Fire Pack scouting group, he could smell the faint ashy scent on their wings.

“Jupiter!” Ray squeaked, she ran out of their hiding spot to his side. Before she could reach him another wolf, who looked similar to Alano, grabbed her by one of her perfect white wings and pushed her to the ground.

Ray yelped in pain and Jupiter felt rage boiling in his stomach like lightning.

“Border breakers, state your business or be snuffed out.” A calm voice demanded from over Jupiter.

Ray snarled, “Let us go!”

She suddenly howled in pain when the wolf holding her bit down harder on her wing.

“Stop!” Jupiter pleaded, he felt a tingling on his fur as he tried to get free, he knew he was too small to escape the paws of an adult Fire Pack wolves hold, but he was surprised when she yelped in pain and backed away.

Jupiter got up to his paws and glared at her, confused, angry and afraid.

She was much bigger than Sunny. Though dark, the moon gave enough light for him to see her clearly. She was orange, but a darker more rustic orange than Alano’s wings, and she had black stripes across her legs, back and face, her wings were blue, with darker blue stripes along the ends.

She glared at her paw, then at Jupiter, her eyes widened when she saw his wings. “So it’s true.” she growled, taking a step forward. Jupiter fell to his rump and stared up at her, wings trembling.

The wolf holding Ray let go of her wing and looked at the older wolf. He was a light grey, lighter than Alano, and at first glance looked very similar to him, but his fur was speckled with darker grey like ash, and his wings were yellow, he was a lot skinnier and shorter too.

“Kevver, they’re clearly River Pack spies!” even his voice sounded more annoying.

Kevver kept glaring at Jupiter.

“Kevver!” Sunny approached confidently, “Oh great, I see you met those two troublesome *lost pups*.”

“Lost...pups?” Kevver seemed to calm more when she saw Sunny, but she instantly tensed and growled when she saw Alano behind him.

Alano returned the glare and held his nose high, “Smoke it down grandma-” Sunny smacked Alano in the face with his wing.

“Ash,” Sunny continued, “Said he saw a couple of River Pack miscreants near the border.” he nodded to the other wolf with yellow wings.

“We went to go make sure they didn’t cross on *accident*.” Alano added, still glaring at Kevver.

Kevver looked at Ash and nodded.

Ash snorted and let Ray go, though slowly and not after shoving her away with his wing, his face contorted in disgust.

Ray stood, folding her injured wing, tears in her eyes, "Smoke breather." she muttered

"What did you say Fish Breath?!" Ash growled.

"Ash!" Kevver snarled.

Ash shrank back, earning him a smug grin from Alano.

"Why are you here Wader?" Kevver looked at Ray.

"We got pushed off a cliff by one of our Yearlings!" Ray explained angrily, she glanced at Sunny and Alano, "They saved us."

Kevver glanced at Sunny, "Sunspot, is this true?"

Sunny glanced at Ray and nodded.

Ash stood up, wings flared, "Why would you do that, they're the enemy!" he snarled, his voice cracking, "Who cares if a few stupid water lovers die? Good riddance!"

Sunny looked down at Ash, "Two pups found dead at Fire packs border, do you really want to start a war?"

Ash grumbled something and stomped away, "I'll report back to Zax Scorcpaw." he stated, before flying away towards the dormant Volcano.

Kevver looked at Sunny, obviously not caring what Ash did, "You are wise in your thinking Sunspot...but." she glared at Jupiter, "Why, pray tell, would you save the Wolfsbane?"

Chapter 3

Wolfsbane?! Jupiter thought in panic. He pressed his wings closer to his side. Out of all the names you had to call me... why the one of the bringer of doom, i'm not evil!?

He could barely pay attention to the conversation now, his mind was clouded with thoughts of the legend of the Wolfsbane, the bringer of destruction, the one destined to destroy the four packs and a child of Darkfang.

But how could she call him that, Darkfang, and the legends were just that, legends, everybody knew that they weren't true, Monsters? Blood Pack? Darkfang? They weren't real!

He turned his gaze to look at his leathery wings and winced. He was living proof that they were.

He felt his legs buckle and almost instantly felt Rays soft wings and warm fur at his side. He looked up into her soft blue eyes and it felt as if the storm in his head were just chased away by rays of sunshine.

"Are you okay?" she helped him up, she sounded so worried.

Jupiter shook himself and nodded slightly. He was glad she didn't move away. He finally listened into the argument.

"- Fairytales and puppy stories, honestly Kevver, I'm surprised you even believe that kind of stuff," Alano was saying, "I thought you to be a sensible wolf."

Sunny gave Alano a look, which was awarded with a flick of Alano's wing to Sunny's face.

"I had heard of a pup born to River Pack that had a deformity" Kevver looked back at Jupiter, clearly ignoring the scouts, "I guess they were just lies to stiffly suspicion from the backs about a pup with the blood of Darkfang."

Jupiter did his best to meet her gaze with defiance, but he easily broke and looked down at his paws.

“That’s enough kevlar.” Ray interrupted, puffing her wings out, “We’re going home, I’m sure River Packs alpha would *love* to hear of your treatment of his *nephew*.”

Ray smirked at Kevver’s reaction, even though it was small.

Kevver repositioned her wings and glanced at Sunny.

“Take these two strays back to their territory.” She ordered.

Sunny nodded and slowly walked to stand over Jupiter and Ray.

Alano gave Kevver a smug look and went to stand next to Sunny.

“Not. You.” Kevver snarled, “You’re coming back with me.”

Alano rolled his eyes dramatically.

Ray giggled slightly

Alano winked at Ray before taking off behind Kevver.

Jupiter gave Ray a look, but she was busy watching Kevver and Alano flying off in the distance, which earned her a more weirded out look from him.

The three stood for a while in awkward silence until Sunny finally spoke up.

“Sorry about that mate,” He twitched his wings, “My brother can be a bit...eh, you know.” He gave them an awkward smile.

They followed behind Sunny as they all walked towards the border.

Jupiter was grateful, despite being of age to begin flight lessons, he still hadn’t begun them.

They walked for about an hour, Jupiter was surprised that they hadn’t reached River Pack yet, they hadn’t gone THAT far into Fire Pack border.

He gave Ray a look and she knew exactly what he was thinking.

Ray trotted up besides the yellow and black scout, "Mr Sunspot?"
He looked down at her, "Just call me Sunny mate."

"Okay, Sunny, why haven't we reached River Pack border yet?"

He shrugged his wings, "Well you did walk through the tunnels remember, they run all across Alatya, you can easily get lost, you probably traveled farther than you thought."
He noted.

Jupiter sniffed the air, he knew that they couldn't be in Fire Pack territory now, if they were the scent would have been stronger. They were in a stretch of grass lands, there were few trees and much less rocks than in Fire pack territory.

"We are currently in The Between, a stretch of unclaimed land between each Pack territory." Sunny continued.

Ray piped up, "I learned about that, isn't that kind of like the lands between River Pack and the Unknown Lands?"

Jupiter couldn't help but smile, Ray was so smart.

Sunny tilted his head, "I guess, but I believe that spans way more than this, it would take you almost 5 days of non-stop flying to cross." Sunny thought, "But who would want to do that, nothing but endless desert or tundra beyond there."

That was new to Jupiter, he had always thought it was weird that there weren't more packs when there was plenty of land to the east, but now he knew.

They walked until the moon reached its peak, by now Jupiter and Ray were exhausted. Jupiter was dragging his tail and his paws ached, he hadn't walked this long in his life. He was happy when he finally caught that similar scent of home in the distance and when he looked up he could see familiar landmarks like the Great tree in the far distance.

"Heeeyooooo!"

Jupiter jumped at first at the sudden howl from above.

The group stopped to see a single wolf flying overhead, he slowly spiraled before landing a small ways away from them.

Jupiter already knew who it was before he did, but his suspicion was proven when the one greeting them suddenly stopped, spun around, and peed on a nearby tree.

Peefu

“Greetings!” Peefu strutted up to them. He was seasons older than Sunny, but acted way younger than he looked. His cyan fur looked strange in the moonlight.

Peefu extended one of his rough green feathered wings in greeting to Sunny, who touched his own wing to Peefu’s.

Peefu smiled down at Jupiter and Ray, “Well well well, look who you found, I believe you have met ol’ Jupi here then?” Peefu chattered.

Sunny nodded, “These two got lost but don’t worry, they are...” Sunny glanced at Ray before continuing, “mostly unharmed.”

Peefu inspected Ray’s wing briefly then looked over Jupiter and nodded. “Welp, things are bound to happen when pups run off into other packs’ territories!”

“But we didn’t run off!” Jupiter shouted out, “Shano pushed me off the cliff!”

Peefu gave them a bewildered look, “Well! If fish don’t fly I’ll be!”

Sunny gave Peefu a look before looking at Jupiter and Ray.

Ray shrugged, “You got your weird sayings, we have ours!”

“Right...well you seem to be in good wings, I’d better get back before Alano starts a fire.” Sunny looked at Peefu, who nodded flamboyantly, before taking off back towards Fire pack territory.

Peefu examined Jupiter more closely, “Well you don’t look very ‘pushed off a cliff by Shano’ to me.”

Ray chuckled nervously, “well, It was kind of my fault, I was defending him when I kind of accidentally nudged him off.”

Peefu nodded understandingly, “Happens” he stood up straighter, “Well Jupi, you have a very worried mother who has been confined to her den for almost murdering Bullar’s child, so let’s get you home!”

“What?” Ray blurted.

Peefu tilted his head, “Well, the young miscreant Shano came back to the tree flaunting how he had ‘gotten rid’ of our little odd friend here so Ursa notably went a little feral.”

Jupiter tucked his head behind one of his wings in embarrassment, “Yeah, I’d better tell her I’m okay.”

Ray snorted, “Serves him right.”

Peefu took them the rest of the way back. They crossed a few smaller rivers with the help of Peefu until finally they entered pack grounds at the break of dawn.

The Great Tree loomed over them, a tree bigger than any other. It was nearly six times bigger than the trees in the surrounding areas.

Wolves were flying in and out of the tree’s leaves. Jupiter knew that the scouts were living in the branches of the tree.

Several giant roots broke the earth around the base of the Great tree, this is where Jupiter and most of the pack lived, in the many dens dug under these roots.

The feeling of relief for Jupiter had quickly faded when he was greeted with side eyes and the normal weird looks he got from the pack.

He caught the eye of Shano, who had one of his wings wrapped up from an injury he probably got from Jupiter's mother.

Shano stood next to his father, Bullar, who had been lecturing him before he noticed Jupiter's return. Shano glared at Jupiter with so much hate it made him flinch. Jupiter was so used to Shano’s verbal insults, this quiet fury was new, and somehow it scared him even more.

Jupiter’s ears fell flat and he averted his eyes, drawing his wings closer against his side.

Ray trotted up and stood between Jupiter and the gazes of the pack, glaring back at them.

Peefu stopped them and smiled at the gathered wolves, Jupiter couldn't tell if it was genuine or forced.

"Alright folks, the pups are fine, you can stop dithering and get back to work." he assured.

The wolves who sat around gave him a sceptical look before despursing.

Jupiter noticed a wolf standing in front of his den, probably to make sure his mom didn't get out.

"I'm...not ready to face my mom yet." Jupiter mumbled, he glanced at Ray's wing, parts of it were stained red with her blood. "Let's get you to Tidetel."

Ray glanced at her wing, winced and nodded, "Yeah, you're probably right"

Peefu nodded and flew off to do his duties while Jupiter and Ray made their way to the healer's den.

Jupiter and Ray walked up a curved part of the tree where it sloped, making it easy for a wolf to climb it. Around a quarter way for the tree there was a hole which opened up inside the tree revealing Tidetel's den.

The smell of herbs and various flowers filled Jupiter's nose. He sat just inside the den while Ray entered, giving him an apologetic look.

Inside a lean blue furred wolf looking over a few herbs on a wooden shelf that was carved out of the wood of the tree. The shelves were lined with bundles of plants, some tied with twine, others loose and drying. Bits of leaves and petals were scattered across the floor.

"No Lazi, it is just a graze, you won't die." Tidetel was saying. Her light blue wings twitched in annoyance, her dark blue fur was speckled with white, which reminded Jupiter of petals.

A few wing spans away another wolf layed sprawled out on a natural shelf covered in woven grasses, moss and animal pelts.

“I-I mean, it just came out of NO WHERE and B-BOOM!” Lazi whimpered. His lighter blue wings were quivering.

Jupiter could see a very small cut on his thigh, slightly staining the blue fur around it. “I’m sure it was very scary.” Tidetel droned. She didn’t even look at him as she spoke, already turning her attention back to her herbs.

“I’m pretty sure that stag was thirsty for blood.” Lazi went on, his voice wavering.

Tidetel turned with a poultice balanced between her wings when she saw Ray.

“Oh you poor puppy!” she instantly dropped her herbs and ran to Ray’s side sniffing around her wound.

Lazi looked up, giving the healer a very offended and hurt look.

“Were you attacked by Fire pack?” she guessed. Her nose brushed gently along Ray’s wing as she inspected it.

Ray laughed nervously, “Well, kind of?”

Jupiter watched Tidetel fuss over Ray for a little bit. She moved quickly but carefully, pulling herbs down, pressing them into place, wrapping the wing with practiced ease.

He liked Tidetel, he was sweet, even when she didn’t want to be, she cared deeply for others feelings, well, when it wasn’t Lazi. He could hardly believe she was his aunt.

He wished she could care about him, but he knew her mate wouldn’t let her go near him. His own Uncle hated him, and he didn’t even try to hide it.

As if the mere thought of him had summoned him, The Alpha of River Pack stepped through the entrance, casting the den into shadow.

A chill ran up his spine and through his bones.

His uncle stood inside the entrance. His bright pink wings spread slightly. Scars ran across his bright blue fur. He was covered in them. Scars across his neck, chest...and face. Even in the dim light, they stood out, cutting across his fur in jagged lines.

Jupiter was glad he never had to see his uncle's face.

Zeppad wore a war helmet made of Shellstone, it covered his entire face, it had two slits on either end of the mask, making it so he could see, but you would never know where he was looking. The surface of it was smooth and pale with a hint of pink, almost reflective, catching the faint light in a dull sheen.

He always wore that helmet.

Tidetel had wrapped Ray's wing partially by now. She looked up and smiled at her mate. Jupiter had no idea who someone so colorful could be so menacing.

Zeppad slowly stepped into the den. He didn't turn to look at Jupiter; he just walked up to Tidetel and spoke in his low, helmet obscured voice.

Jupiter sat frozen, staring at Zeppad until Ray came to his side. He didn't even realize he had stopped breathing until she moved.

"He's not that scary." she said quietly.

"Yes...he is." Jupiter breathed.

Ray put her good wing around him. "Come on, let's go see your mom."

